

I was honored to speak at the Highland Park walk for Israel. We joined hundreds of people to show our commitment to the alliance between two great democracies. Here is what I said:

Remarks of Congressman Mark Kirk

10th District of Illinois

May 7, 2006

Highland Park, Illinois

Standing right here on this beautiful spring day, we are 1,000 miles from any foreign sea. We live here in some of the best educated communities in America.

Much has been given to us. We have built a zone of relative security and sleep without great fear of a foreign attack.

To us, much has been given. From us, much is expected.

We are expected to care for our families -- to protect children and encourage bright futures. Yes, we can do that.

We are expected here on the North Shore to advance science, medicine, culture and art. Yes, we do that too.

But if that is all – securing our careers and families – we fall below our vast potential for doing good in the world.

As educated citizens of this world, we are called to a higher purpose. Purposes like:

-- Protecting our earth's environment,

-- Ending genocide in Sudan, and

-- Guiding the peaceful rise of China.

One region cries out for our personal time and attention. In a “CNN World” where a conflict in one place is watched in all places, we are judged by our commitment to our democratic allies in Israel.

Democracies are best when they defend each other. Our allies in Israel need not just our help – they need our personal commitment of treasure and time.

Today, Israel faces two big threats – one close and constant – one far and potentially mortal.

We are witnessing the rise of a new Middle Eastern intolerance, lead by Hamas. Their leaders say that there can be no peace until there is no Israel.

In Congress, many of us learned the lessons of history. One lesson is that dictators and murders mean what they say. We know that the only Hamas moderate is a Hamas radical who is out of bullets.

As your representative in Congress, I took bipartisan action. We have coordinated our effort with the new Prime Minister of Israel. We have cut off all U.S. assistance to the Hamas-controlled Palestinian Authority.

We will soon consider my bipartisan effort – cosponsored by Democratic Congressman Tom Lantos of California – to close the UN loophole of aid to Hamas.

This is the “Near Danger” to Israel but there is a danger from afar that is even greater.

Iran's leader says that one Holocaust is not enough. He wants another six million dead in the new century. He does not just hate Jews. He hates Americans, Bahais – everyone from Azeris to Zoroastrians who disagree with his new Islamic intolerance. It is a new government-sponsored hatred, backed by Iranian nuclear scientists.

We understand when our friends in Israel tell us via telephone and e-mail:

"I am afraid."

"I have heard the stories of the last century – do I have a future?"

"Will my children grow up?"

They should hear an answer from America's heartland:

Be not afraid for we stand with Israel. The Great Democracy across the sea will protect you. Yes, we will give Israel "eyes in the sky."

Yes, we will provide aid to the government and armed forces to fight terror.

We will do this but we will do much more.

This last Superpower on the earth will use her diplomacy, economy and culture to help change your enemies into friends. The work of decades in Egypt and Jordan will be continued in other countries until Israel's neighbors see her as representing promise, advancement, democracy and especially the rarest value of all in the Middle East: tolerance.

Where do you come in? You must make it your personal goal to help.

In 2001, I went to Israel to learn of her needs.

In 2003, I went to Israel to give her eyes in the sky.

In 2005, I went to Israel to make her an ally as close as Britain to the United States.

In 2007, I will be back in Jerusalem. Will you?

To truly stand with Israel you should promise today you will stand in Israel.

Thank you.